



Golden Gate National Recreation Area

File Code:

L3215 (GOGA-PLAN)

Big Lagoon Working Group Meeting Meeting #14 Notes Sept. 16, 2004

The purpose of the meeting was to convene a Working Group that will provide a venue for interested parties to exchange information, clarify issues and concerns, and collaborate on creative problem solving with the National Park Service (NPS) project team on the Big Lagoon Restoration.

Desired outcomes of this meeting:

- Provide project updates and follow up on previous discussion items. Review project goals and process and next steps.

Meeting Agenda

1. Start Up, Follow Up Items, Announcements
2. Project updates (CTMP Transit Turn-Arounds, PWA Supplemental Analysis, EIS/EIR Request for Proposals; Review Project Goals and Objectives)
3. Discussion
4. Next Steps
5. Meeting evaluation

Announcements

- Saturday is Public Lands Day, no entrance fees are charged fees at parks.
- The 20th annual coastal cleanup will be held Saturday, Sept. 18, 2004. NPS will hold a work day from 9-12 at Muir Beach and at the restoration area on the Banducci site.
- California State Parks has re-routed the coastal trail on the ridge between PanToll and the Heather Cut-off Trail. The former ranch road was obliterated and natural contours were re-established. The new trail is built following natural contours and employing techniques to reduce sedimentation.
- Caltrans has told NPS it will remove the piles of dirt left at turn-outs along Highway 1 from a prior stabilization project.
- NPS second phase of restoration planning for Redwood Creek at the Banducci site is expected to begin in 2005; a public scoping meeting is expected to be held in late fall 2004 or early winter 2005.

Follow-up Items

- A question was raised at the previous BLWG meeting about PWA's analysis of sea level rise. PWA used data from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, with a web address of www.ipcc.ch. PWA used a conservative estimate of 0.7 ft of sea level rise over 50 years. The panel recommends using 1.3 ft. in 100 years or 0.5 feet in 50 years. PWA incorporated this information to address the question of whether restoration alternatives are feasible. They found that sea level rise did not make alternatives infeasible. Their February 2004 Feasibility Analysis report recognizes a likely rise in groundwater elevations due to sea level rise. However, more specific analysis is warranted in the EIS about projected interactions. The question is not: how will sea level rise affect coastal Marin County? The question is specific to this project and this project site.
- A question at the previous meeting was raised about why the project is dealing with the parking lot and whether there could be no parking. It's a project goal to provide a visitor experience and public access that is compatible with ecosystem restoration and historic preservation. So, we have to provide public access and we consider evaluation of the parking lot configuration, size and location and important component to an analysis of the project.
- At last meeting, there was a request to see PWA responses to peer review comments. We can do that; have not done that yet. Many of the responses were not prepared as full responses intended for public review. Also, since then we have done additional analysis that actually addresses many of the questions. Want to annotate the file to make the information clear to the public.
- 2004 Flood Reduction Actions: NPS held a meeting at the site on Aug. 23. Most of the actions proposed at the time entailed manual removal of woody debris downstream of Pacific Way Bridge and armoring the levee. Due to conversations with NOAA fisheries at that time, NPS recognized the opportunity to excavate the right channel, downstream of Pacific Way, because it is completely dry. NPS considered this action after Aug. 23. Approximately 100 linear feet of channel will be excavated. Other debris jams closer to the levee road will be removed by equipment working from the levee road. Work is expected to begin Monday, August 27, 2004. Work trucks will be on Pacific Way.
- Frog Mitigations: The ponds on the Green Gulch pasture have dried out too soon during the past two years to have successful breeding of the California red-legged frog. NPS has submitted a funding request to get to dig out a new pond at the lower Banducci site next summer. NPS would partner with Amadeo Banducci to do the work under their existing volunteer agreement. Once the pond is functional, tadpoles or eggs would have to be relocated to the new pond. NPS will also work with the flashboards at the site culvert next spring to try to improve ponding. NPS will be doing a formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for this work as mitigations for effects of the 2002 flood reduction work at Pacific Way.

Project Updates

- PWA conducted additional analyses on the backbeach lagoon, the stability of the new channel, and potential affects of the project on groundwater availability for the MBCSD and the lower well at Green Gulch. A final report has been delayed due to NPS delays in getting comments on the draft report. A final report from PWA is expected by the end of September, and the report will be posted on the project web site by early October 2004.
- NPS is initiating very preliminary work to get information for a conservation easement with Green Gulch Farm and for acquisition of water rights in the project area.
- Some details of the project remain to be defined with Green Gulch Farm, such as the width of the new emergency access road, the project boundary on Field 7.
- The Request for Proposals for the EIS/EIR was issued; a pre-bid meeting was held, and bids are due by September 30, 2004.
- Possible Transit Turn-Around Locations for the Comprehensive Transportation Management Plan (CTMP) (Carolyn Shoulders). NPS presented sketches of three possible locations where a transit turn-around or drop off could be located: 1) at the beach either near a parking lot at that location or by itself, if the parking lot is located at the alder grove along Highway 1; 2) on either side of Highway 1, where "drop-offs" would occupy a 20-foot-wide area about 60 feet long; 3) at the intersection of Highway 1 and Pacific Way, where the horse paddocks are currently located. A turn-around would need to be about 100 feet by 100 feet to accommodate buses. Drawings have not been prepared yet.
- Final drawings of the six parking lot alternatives to be carried forward to the EIS/EIR are being prepared. For the 175-car parking lot alternative that would be rotated to be parallel to Pacific Way, NPS is not proposing to construct a separate road that would begin at the Pacific Way Bridge. To do so would mean there are two roads side-by-side. NPS proposes, instead, to straighten Pacific Way at the bend, so it appears to a visitor that the main road goes directly into the parking lot, whereas the county road would appear as a side road.
- Review of the Project to Date (Steve Ortega). NPS has held meetings on the project for almost two years, since December 2002, during the project scoping period. NEPA requires only 45 days and a single meeting for such a process. The Big Lagoon project has held 15 public meetings during the scoping phase. NPS will close comments for this phase of the project at the next Big Lagoon Working Group meeting, after which work on the EIS/EIR is expected to begin. A draft EIS/EIR is expected to be issued in Spring 2005. It will identify a preferred alternative for the project and analyze potential impacts of all alternatives. Public workshops will be held on the Draft EIS, and the public comment period will be open for 60 days. Ortega also reviewed the project goals and objectives, which will be used to evaluate environmental impacts.

Questions and Comments [NPS responses are provided in *italics*.]

- Is the left creek channel at Muir Beach drying up a direct result of 2002 flood reduction work? [*It is not clear to NPS that this is the case, but we will seek additional technical information on this.*]
- What will happen to red legged frogs and newts at Big Lagoon/Muir Beach if there is no pond there? Will the critters that are used to this ecosystem of ponded water die? [*The drying of the Green Gulch pasture is only a concern in relation to successful breeding; existing adults would not be expected to die due to the drying. The overall approach to protecting long-term breeding for red-legged frogs will be addressed in a formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.*]
- .When horses were pastured at Green Gulch, they compacted the area and that could have made it more of a swamp.
- Would you consider bringing in red-legged frogs from other areas? [*No, to protect the genetic integrity of the red-legged frog population at Muir Beach, NPS would not bring in frogs from other areas, except as a last resort.*]
- If a new pond is constructed for frogs at the Banducci site, why would it just fill up with sediment? [*The area of the Banducci site NPS is considering for a new pond for red-legged frogs is on the west side of the former flower field, closer to the road and drainage ditch, where rushes already indicate that the area stays fairly wet. That area would not be subjected to routine overflows, although in very high flows it would receive some overflow. NPS will consider sedimentation before it builds the pond. It would be valuable to have a functioning pond at that site prior to construction of the Big Lagoon project to reduce construction impacts.*]
- Why not build an interim pond at Big Lagoon now? [*NPS does not own the land where the frogs occur. Land agreements would need to be in place before constructing a new pond.*]
- Do you really need to have all that in place just to save frogs? It is understandable that these are needed for the Big Lagoon project, but since the project is going to be phased anyway, why couldn't a pond be built at the site right away? [*This is a good question, and we'll pursue this more.*]
- How about digging another pond on the creek-side of the levee road, near the Pacific Way Bridge, where there's already a depression? That would be a good place to have another frog pond. [*It does appear to be a good place for frogs; the prior radio-tracking didn't indicate that they occur there. There could be risks for digging in that area since it is so close to the creek.*]
- What are the criteria for selecting a contractor for the EIS/EIR? [*The criteria are listed in the RFP, which is on the project web site.*]
- What size bus is assumed when you say that a 100-foot by 100-foot transit turnaround is needed? [*The transportation planners know this information; NPS will find out.*].
- Are the areas proposed for transit pull-offs along Highway 1 in the Caltrans rights-of-way? [*NPS believes this is the case; it is possible that a very small area of NPS or Green Gulch land could be within the area consider for transit pull-offs.*]

- If you need more room, move it over on NPS land.
- Adding a median to roads is proven to reduce speeding by about one-third. This worked very well at Inverness. This would contribute to safer pedestrian access.
- What else would be at transit pullout? *[There would probably be a shelter.]*
- Make it clear to everyone what would get put in a transit pullout – we don't want tourist stuff, snack bars, etc.
- What level of analysis would be conducted on the transit turn-around? *[Since the CTMP project, and not the Big Lagoon project, would build the transit turn-around and select its final location, the Big Lagoon project will analyze locations for cumulative impacts. It will consider the footprint of the turn-around for environmental impacts and its impact on local traffic patterns.]*
- The drawing for restoration Alternative 3 shows a boardwalk from a beach parking area to the beach – it is clear cut access to beach. Has work been done on other alternatives for that? *[NPS considers such alignments as possibilities, not actual design proposals. Many similar recreational elements are interchangeable among alternatives.]*
- A picnic area could make a hole in the riparian areas, or, if it's too close to houses then garbage cans smell and noise disturbs residents. Shouldn't have too close to houses. *[NPS will consider these concerns in placing a picnic area and other amenities.]*
- Wouldn't it be worth it to have a longer access road if it relieved traffic congestion? *[Comment noted.]*
- The CTMP isn't analyzing a 200 car lot. It would make sense to take that alternative out. At the last public CTMP workshop, the CTMP planners said they wouldn't increase the size of the parking lot over existing capacity. *[The parking lot sizes proposed for evaluation in the Big Lagoon EIS/EIR were provided by the CTMP project; the 200-car parking lot is still proposed by the CTMP.]*
- Shouldn't the maximum parking lot proposed for the Big Lagoon project match the maximum Muir Beach parking lot proposed by CTMP? *[Yes, currently that is the case.]*
- I urge NPS to focus on environmental issues and let them driving the parking lot, rather than vice versa. There never is "enough" parking – there is no such thing. Don't let that take priority. *[In fact, NPS will select a preferred restoration approach before it selects a parking lot. Environmental considerations will be a very important component of selecting a parking lot size. This is an advantage of having the Big Lagoon project be somewhat ahead of the schedule of the CTMP project, since the Big Lagoon project can carefully evaluate site environmental impacts.]*
- How much will carrying capacity play into maximum parking at the beach—people said that they feel crowded when 250 people are at the beach. *[NPS will consider this information.]*
- Everything with Green Gulch hasn't been solidified yet. What if they want horses on all the fields. How can you close comments and then we don't have a forum to discuss project developments? *[There will be ample opportunity to comment in the draft EIS.]*

- The kind of process we've had here for this project is far superior, it's collegial. The normal way under the EIS process is not functional. I encourage NPS to have more working group meetings, it is worthwhile for everyone.
- After November, NPS is closing the game to everyone but Green Gulch, who continues to play and make changes. It feels uncomfortable.
- Comment from Green Gulch Farm representative: The project boundaries at Field 7, the size of the access road for emergency access, and the transit turn-around possibly at the corner of Highway 1 and Pacific Way are some issues that haven't been completely resolved.
- Green Gulch has a moral, if not legal responsibility, to make sure frogs survive on Green Gulch property in interim.
- The list of project constraints cites the fact that flood flows shouldn't disrupt existing septic systems. Don't lock yourselves into protecting 35-year-old septic systems...some trade offs are possible. P. 18, 3rd bullet from bottom, too strong of language, too much focus on crap and cars.
- What are the risks in the project that could hold up the project? *[Issues related to money or lawsuits could hold up a project.]*
- Mia Monroe, NPS, was hoping that a watershed approach would have evolved...what is community doing to engage in the project other than the Big Lagoon Working Group meetings?
- What is the status of the analysis on the effect of lowering groundwater at the MBCSD well data? *[The draft findings by PWA were discussed at the previous BLWG meeting. The final report is late due to NPS being held up, but a final report is expected within the month.]*
- One of the meetings for the Draft EIS should be in March
- How can Muir Beach Community Services District be assured that they won't be blamed for take of species? *[This is related to the evaluation of surface water elevations, which will be addressed in the PWA supplemental report.]*

Meeting evaluation

<u>Liked</u>	<u>Disliked:</u> Snacks (ginger snaps) Have public comment close a few days AFTER the next meeting How to more widely distribute information from this meeting
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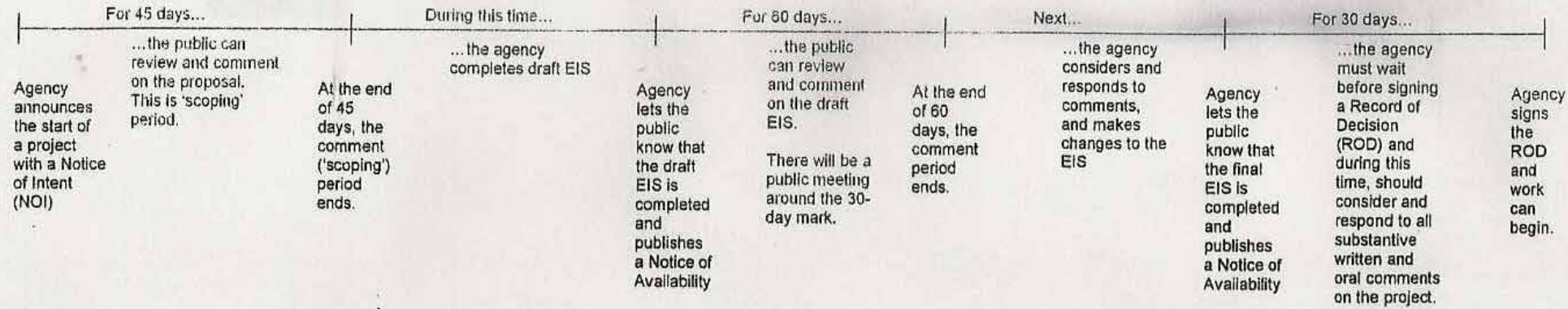
NEXT MEETINGS: The next meeting is expected to be scheduled for November. NPS expects to notify participants by mail.

Meeting Attendees:

Eleven people signed in at the meeting. In addition to those representing themselves, the following groups and agencies were represented among the attendees:

- California Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Green Gulch Farm
- Greater Muir Beach Neighbors
- National Park Service, Golden Gate National Recreation Area
- Sierra Club
- Muir Beach residents and property owners
- Marin Conservation League
- Ocean Riders
- Tomales Bay Watershed Council

Typical NEPA Process for an EIS



NEPA Process for the Big Lagoon EIS/R

